Archie
ADVENTURE SERIES
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SEGA®
KNUCKLES™
THE ECHIDNA
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SPAZ / GALAN / PENDERS
PENDERS • SPAZIANTE • GALAN
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KNUCKLES™

Book Seven

Dark Vengeance

Part One of Three

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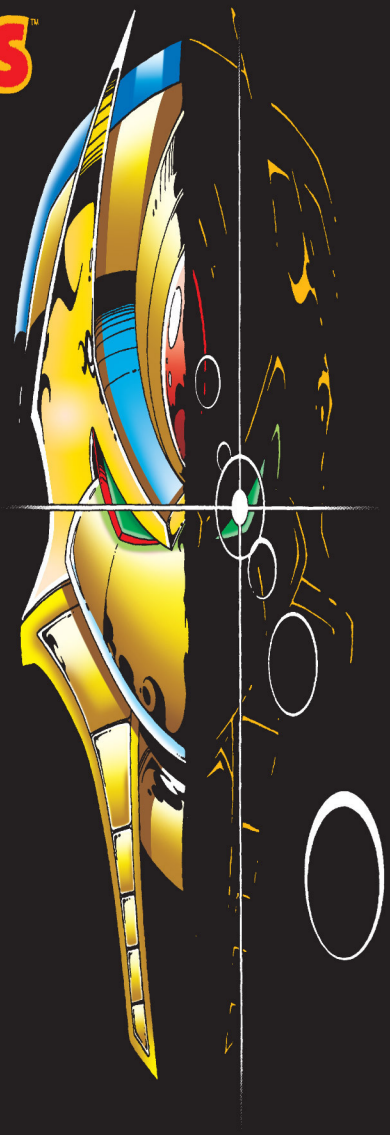


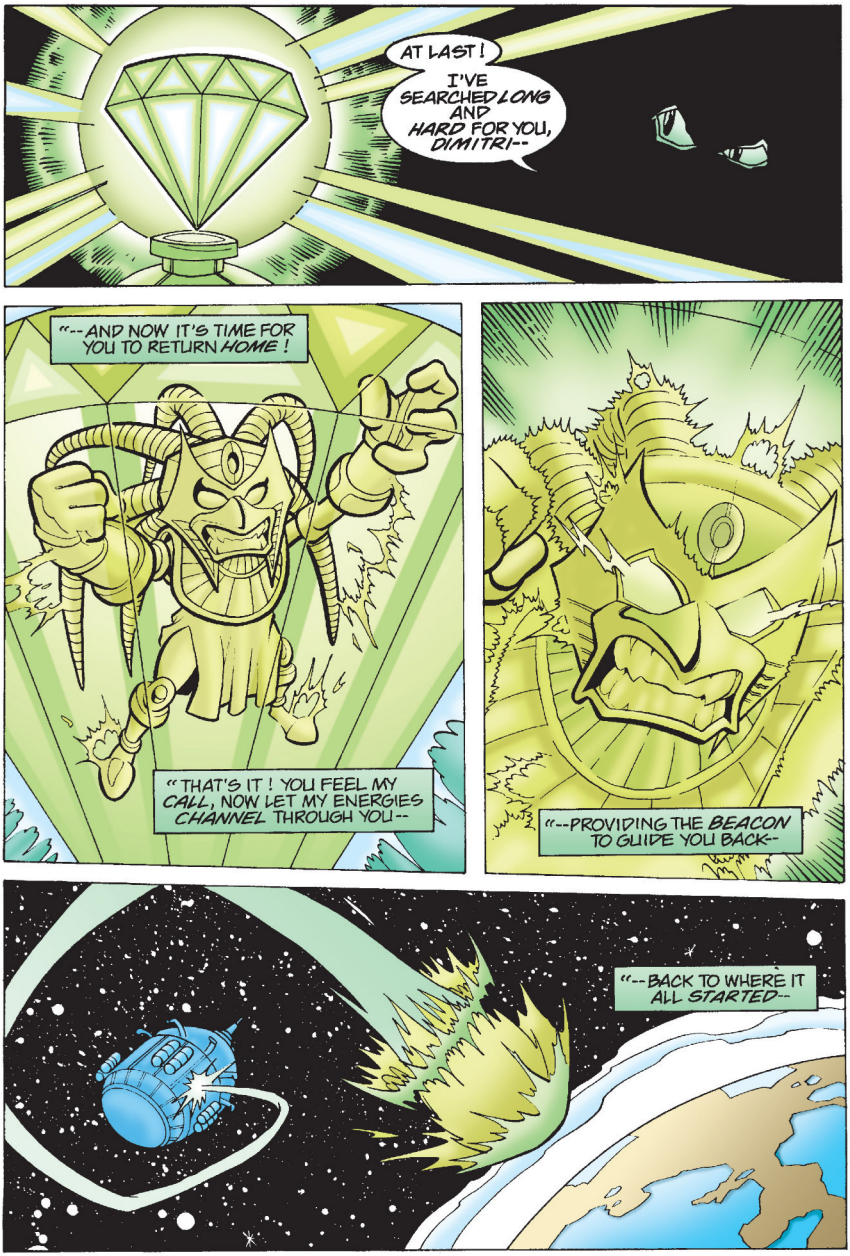
Born to the most noble of Echidna houses, the latest to continue the family heritage and responsibility as guardian of the floating island, defender of all from the forces of evil from the world beyond, as well as those who would threaten within, he is none other than Knuckles the Echidna!

Due to his relative youth and lack of experience, Knuckles believed his task a simple one: defend the natives of the floating island from those who would threaten it.

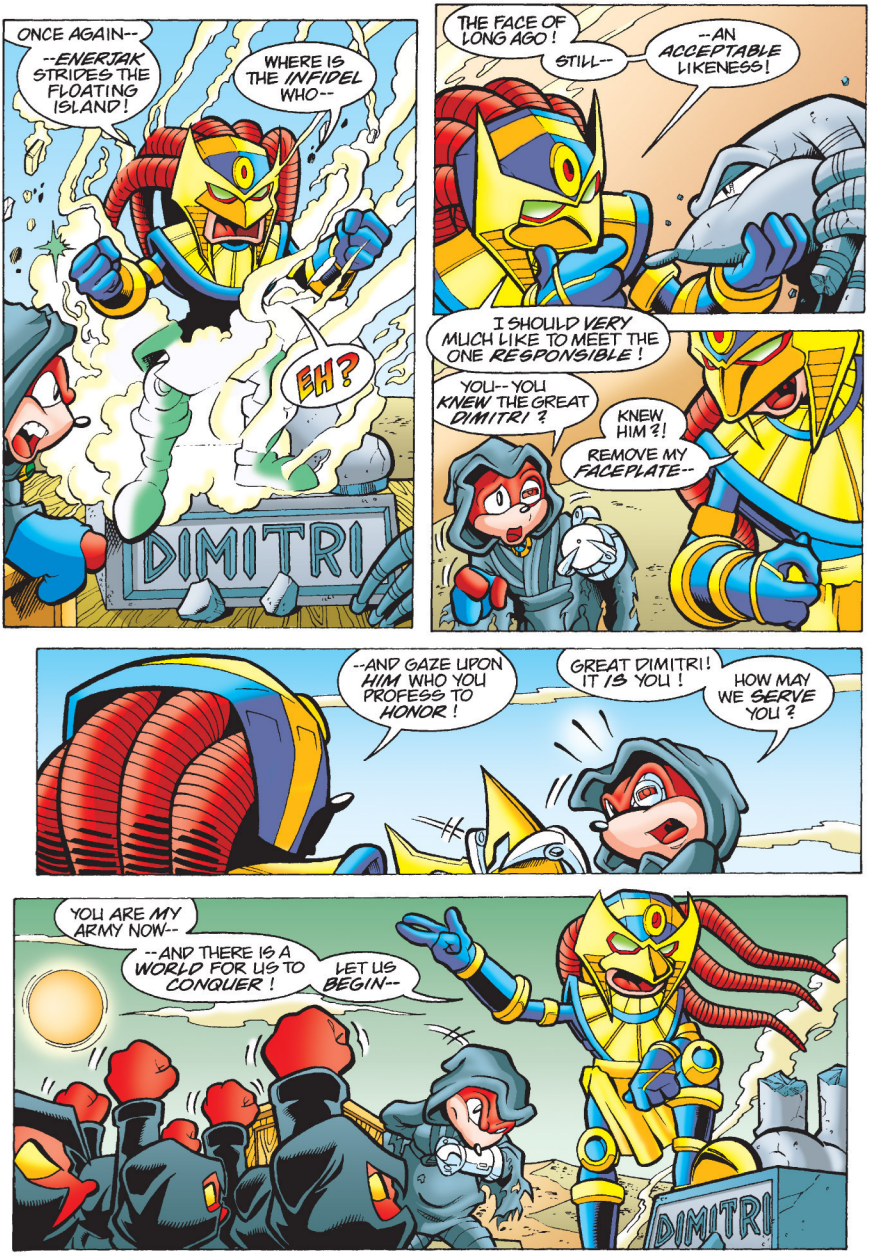
Now Knuckles is learning that he is one of many of a long line who have guarded the safety of his people. Having only recently been reunited with his people (who had been existing in another dimension) he is no longer the only one of his kind and is having a hard time dealing with the implications of that fact.

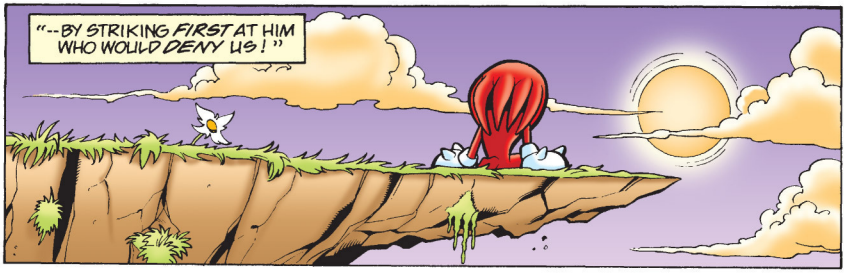
Since the appearance of his fireant companion, Archimedes, Knuckles has begun to comprehend that his existence is a lot more complicated than originally believed. With duties and obligations that have been handed down from one generation to the next, Knuckles is learning to deal with problems that had their origins long ago.

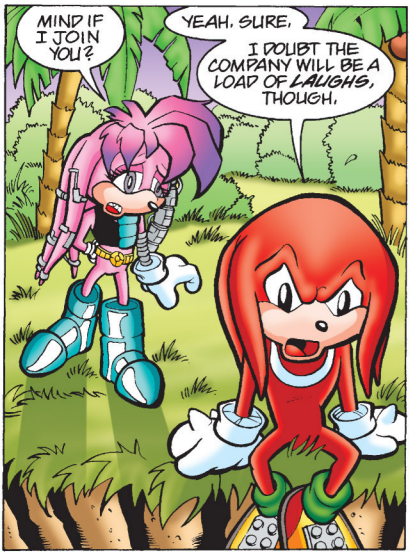
As a result, Knuckles has never before faced the fury of someone bent on seeking his total and complete destruction, until now...

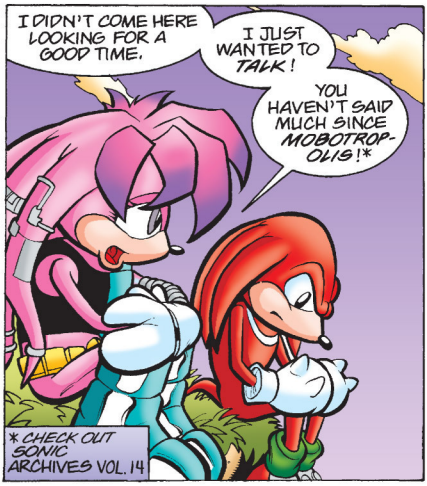

AT LAST!
I'VE SEARCHED LONG AND HARD FOR YOU, DIMITRI--
"--AND NOW IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO RETURN HOME!
"THAT'S IT! YOU FEEL MY CALL, NOW LET MY ENERGIES CHANNEL THROUGH YOU--
"--PROVIDING THE BEACON TO GUIDE YOU BACK--
"--BACK TO WHERE IT ALL STARTED--

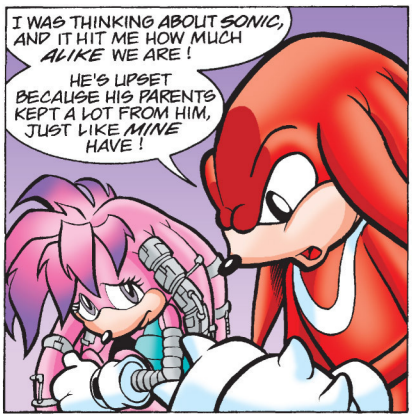
KNUCKLES ON
DEADLY HOMECOMING
"--SO THAT WE MAY BOTH ACHIEVE OUR GREATEST DESIRES!"
--AND WITH THIS STATUE IN THE IMAGE OF THE GREAT DIMITRI TO INSPIRE US--
--WE REDEDICATE OURSELVES TO THE HOLY TASK OF RESTORING ECHIDNA SOCIETY TO ITS NATURAL--
BY AMIL'S FORCE--!
DIMITRI
GREAT DIMITRI'S STATUE!
WHO WOULD DARE--


ONCE AGAIN--
--ENERJAK STRIDES THE FLOATING ISLAND!
WHERE IS THE INFIDEL WHO--
EH?
DIMITRI
THE FACE OF LONG AGO!
STILL--
--AN ACCEPTABLE LIKENESS!
I SHOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO MEET THE ONE RESPONSIBLE!
YOU--YOU KNEW THE GREAT DIMITRI?
KNEW HIM?!
REMOVE MY FACEPLATE--
--AND GAZE UPON HIM WHO YOU PROFESS TO HONOR!
GREAT DIMITRI! IT IS YOU!
HOW MAY WE SERVE YOU?
YOU ARE MY ARMY NOW--
--AND THERE IS A WORLD FOR US TO CONQUER!
LET US BEGIN--
DIMITRI

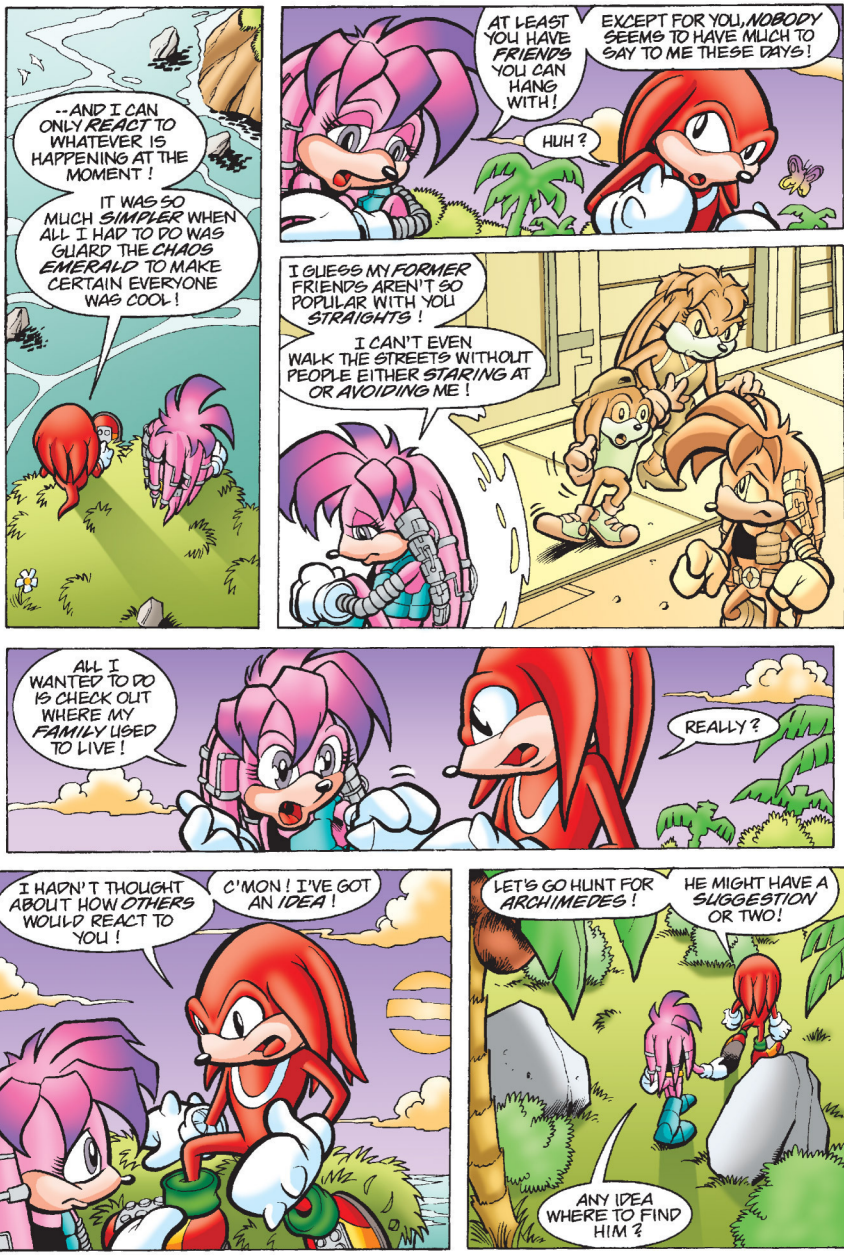

"--BY STRIKING FIRST AT HIM WHO WOULD DENY US!"

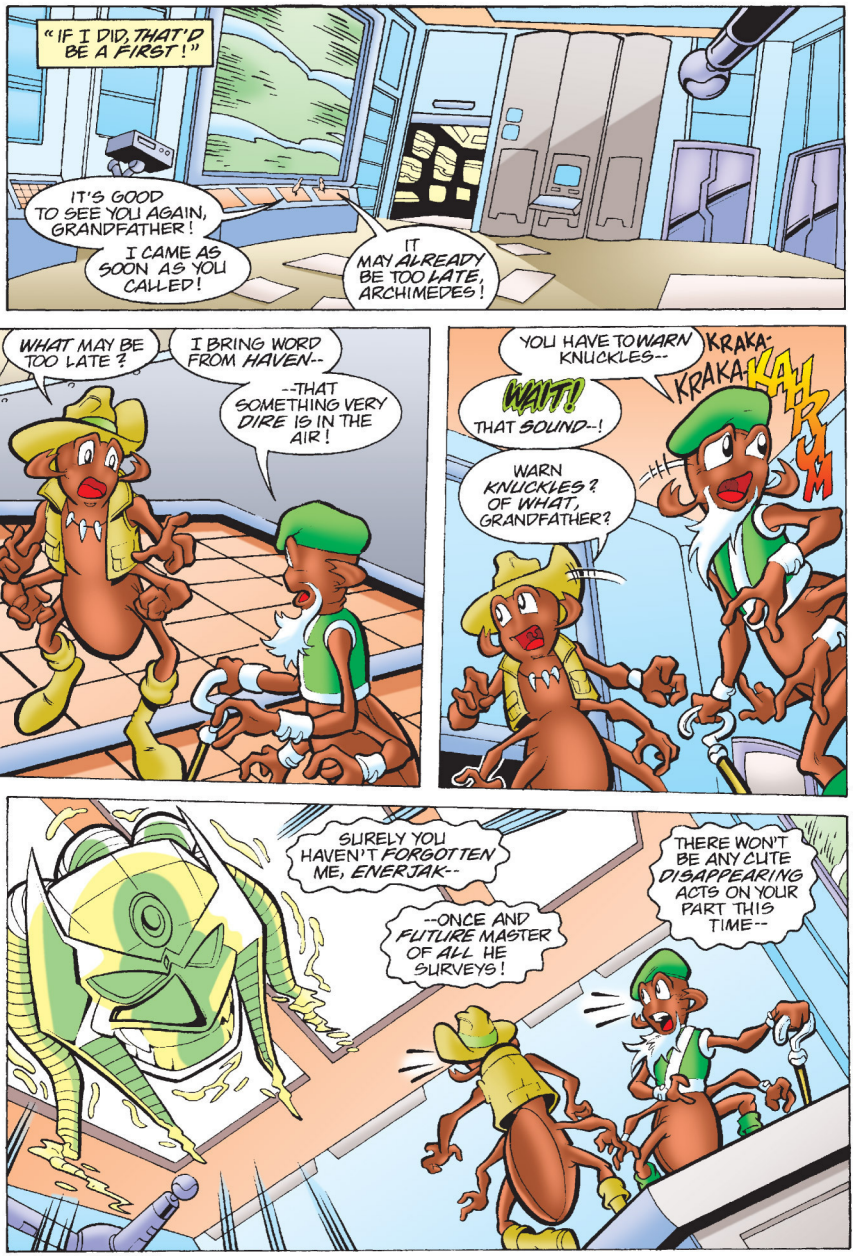

MIND IF I JOIN YOU?
YEAH, SURE.
I DOUBT THE COMPANY WILL BE A LOAD OF LAUGHS, THOUGH.


I DIDN'T COME HERE LOOKING FOR A GOOD TIME.
I JUST WANTED TO TALK!
YOU HAVEN'T SAID MUCH SINCE MOBOTROPOLIS!*
* CHECK OUT SONIC ARCHIVES VOL. 14

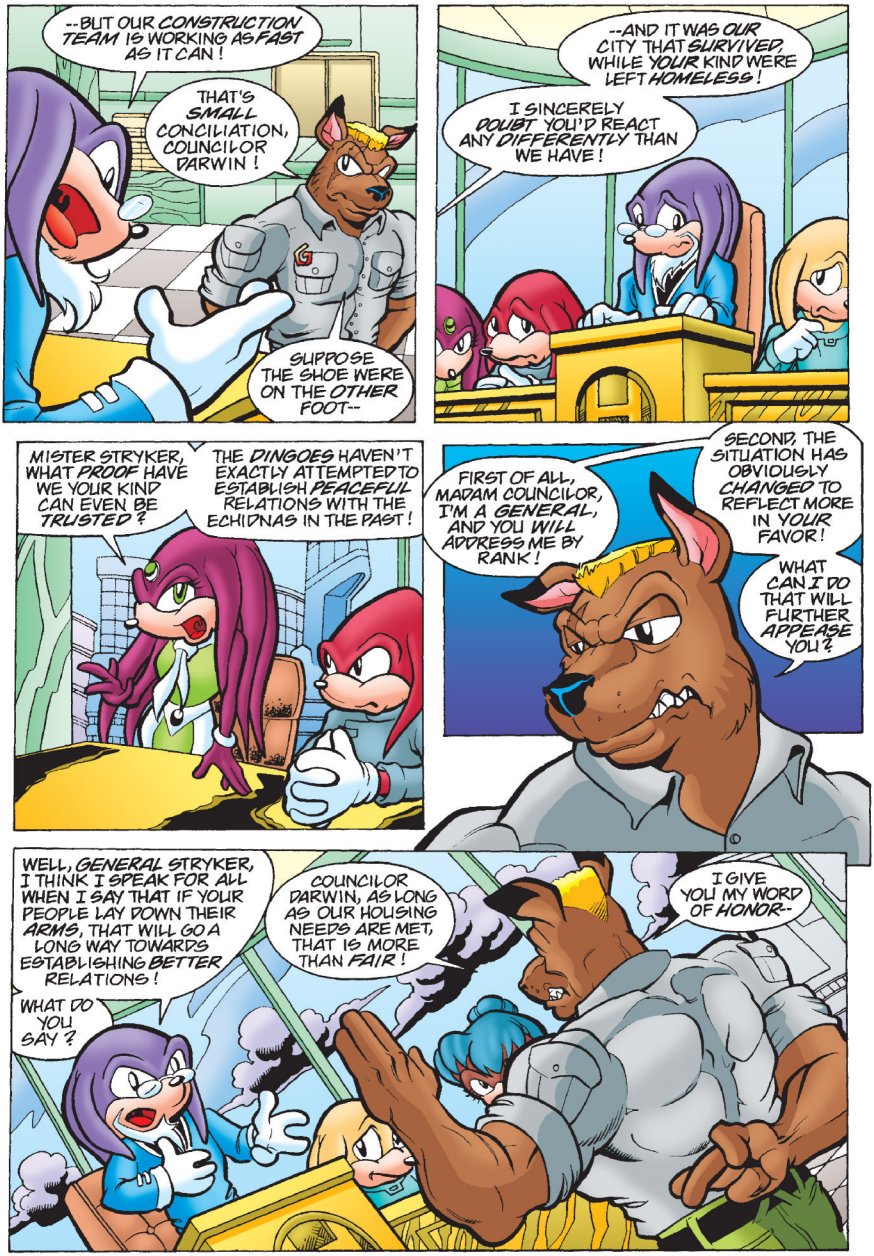

I WAS THINKING ABOUT SONIC, AND IT HIT ME HOW MUCH ALIKE WE ARE!
HE'S UPSET BECAUSE HIS PARENTS KEPT A LOT FROM HIM, JUST LIKE MINE HAVE!

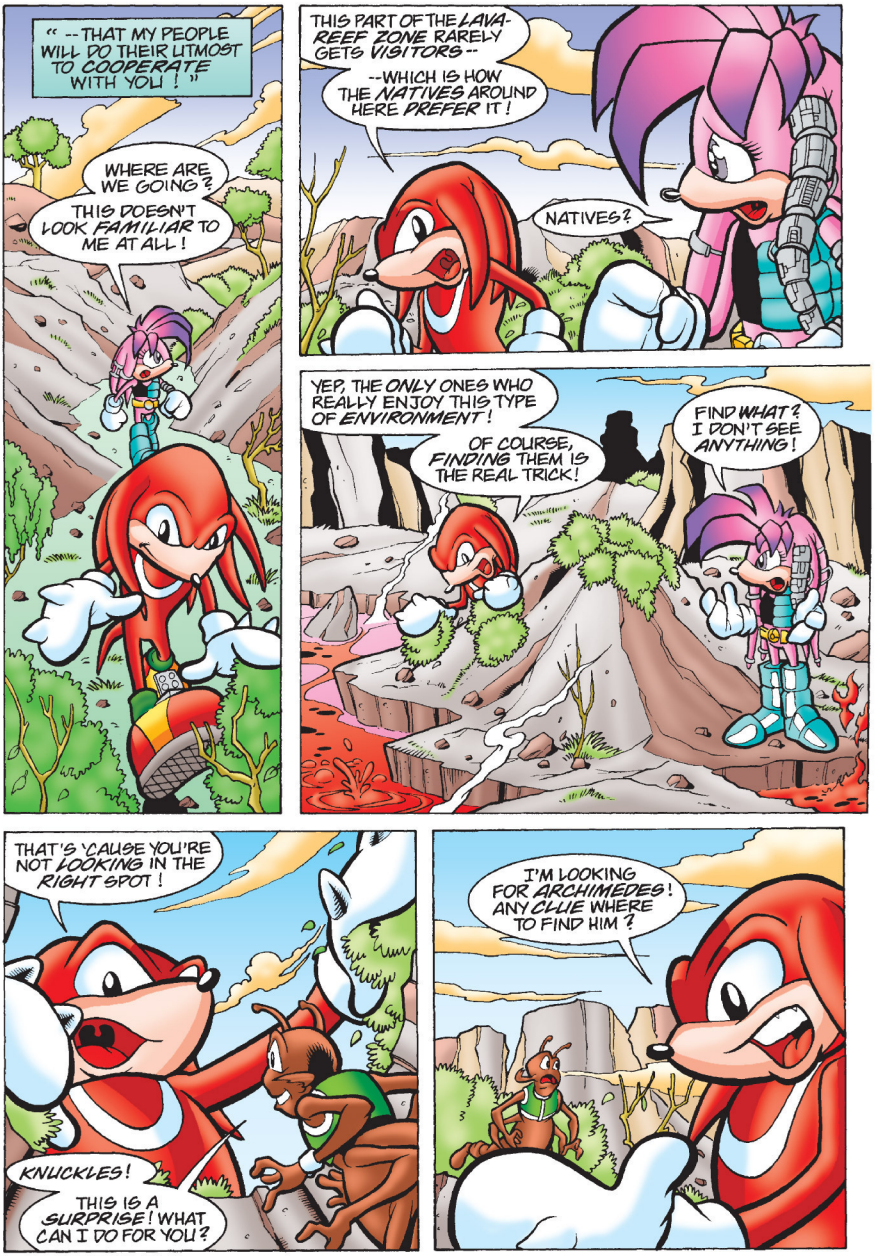
ONLY IT'S NOT JUST MY PARENTS, IT'S EVERYONE!
IT'S LIKE THEY ALL KNOW SOMETHING AND I DON'T!
I FEEL LIKE A PUPPET WITH EVERYONE PULLING THE STRINGS!

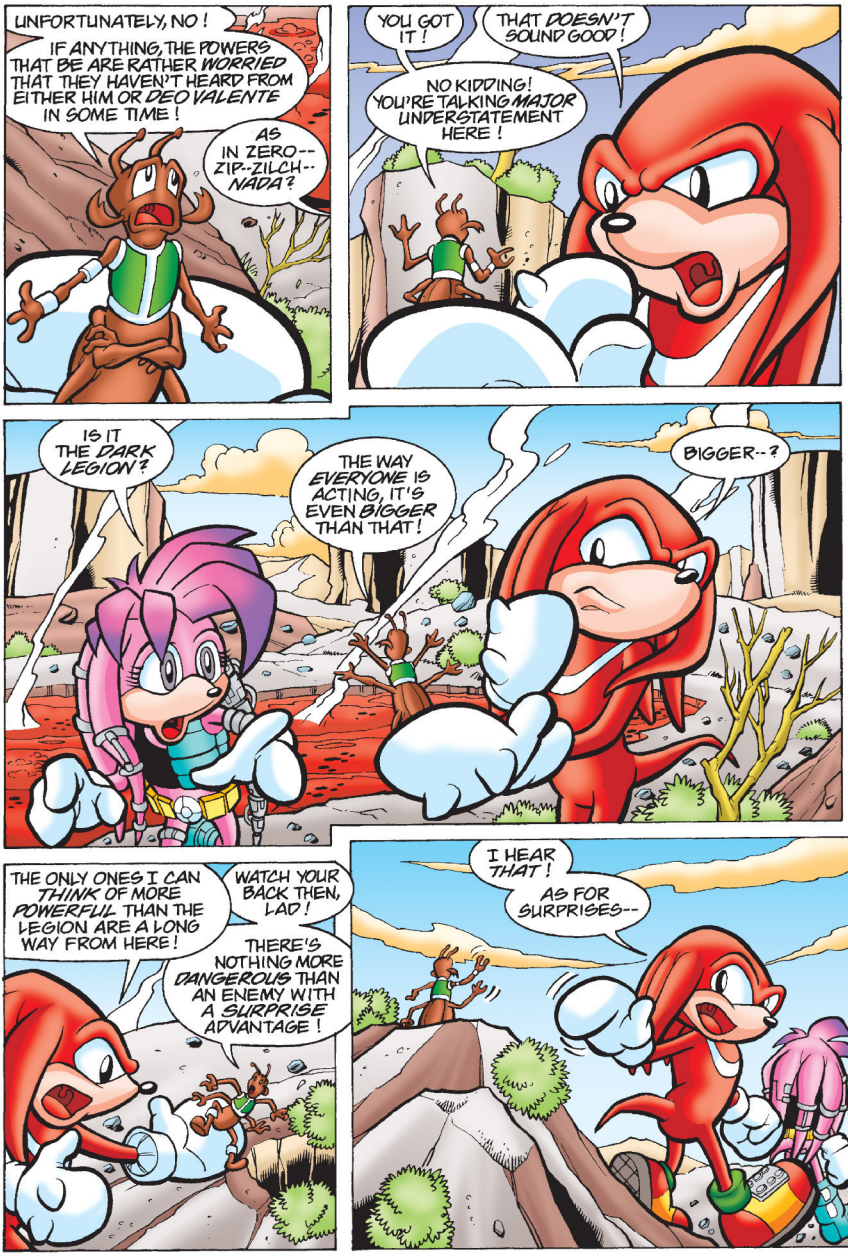

--AND I CAN ONLY REACT TO WHATEVER IS HAPPENING AT THE MOMENT!
IT WAS SO MUCH SIMPLER WHEN ALL I HAD TO DO WAS GUARD THE CHAOS EMERALD TO MAKE CERTAIN EVERYONE WAS COOL!
AT LEAST YOU HAVE FRIENDS YOU CAN HANG WITH!
EXCEPT FOR YOU, NOBODY SEEMS TO HAVE MUCH TO SAY TO ME THESE DAYS!
HUH?
I GUESS MY FORMER FRIENDS AREN'T SO POPULAR WITH YOU STRAIGHTS!
I CAN'T EVEN WALK THE STREETS WITHOUT PEOPLE EITHER STARING AT OR AVOIDING ME!
ALL I WANTED TO DO IS CHECK OUT WHERE MY FAMILY USED TO LIVE!
REALLY?
I HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT HOW OTHERS WOULD REACT TO YOU!
C'MON! I'VE GOT AN IDEA!
LET'S GO HUNT FOR ARCHIMEDES!
HE MIGHT HAVE A SUGGESTION OR TWO!
ANY IDEA WHERE TO FIND HIM?

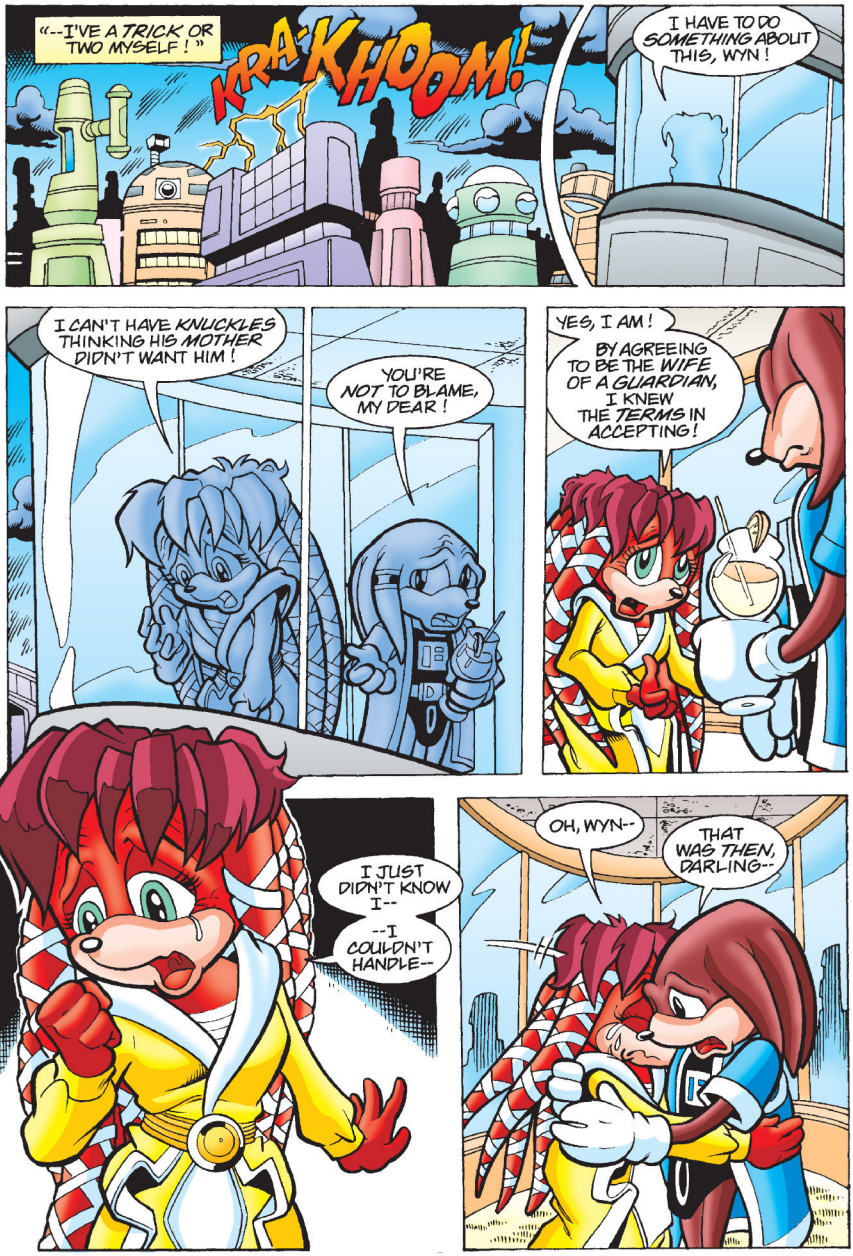

"IF I DID, THAT'D BE A FIRST!"
IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN, GRANDFATHER!
I CAME AS SOON AS YOU CALLED!
IT MAY ALREADY BE TOO LATE, ARCHIMEDES!
WHAT MAY BE TOO LATE?
I BRING WORD FROM HAVEN--
--THAT SOMETHING VERY DIRE IS IN THE AIR!
YOU HAVE TO WARN KNUCKLES--
KRAKA-KRAKA-KA-BOOM
WAIT! THAT SOUND--!
WARN KNUCKLES? OF WHAT, GRANDFATHER?
SURELY YOU HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ME, ENERJAK--
--ONCE AND FUTURE MASTER OF ALL HE SURVEYS!
THERE WON'T BE ANY CUTE DISAPPEARING ACTS ON YOUR PART THIS TIME--

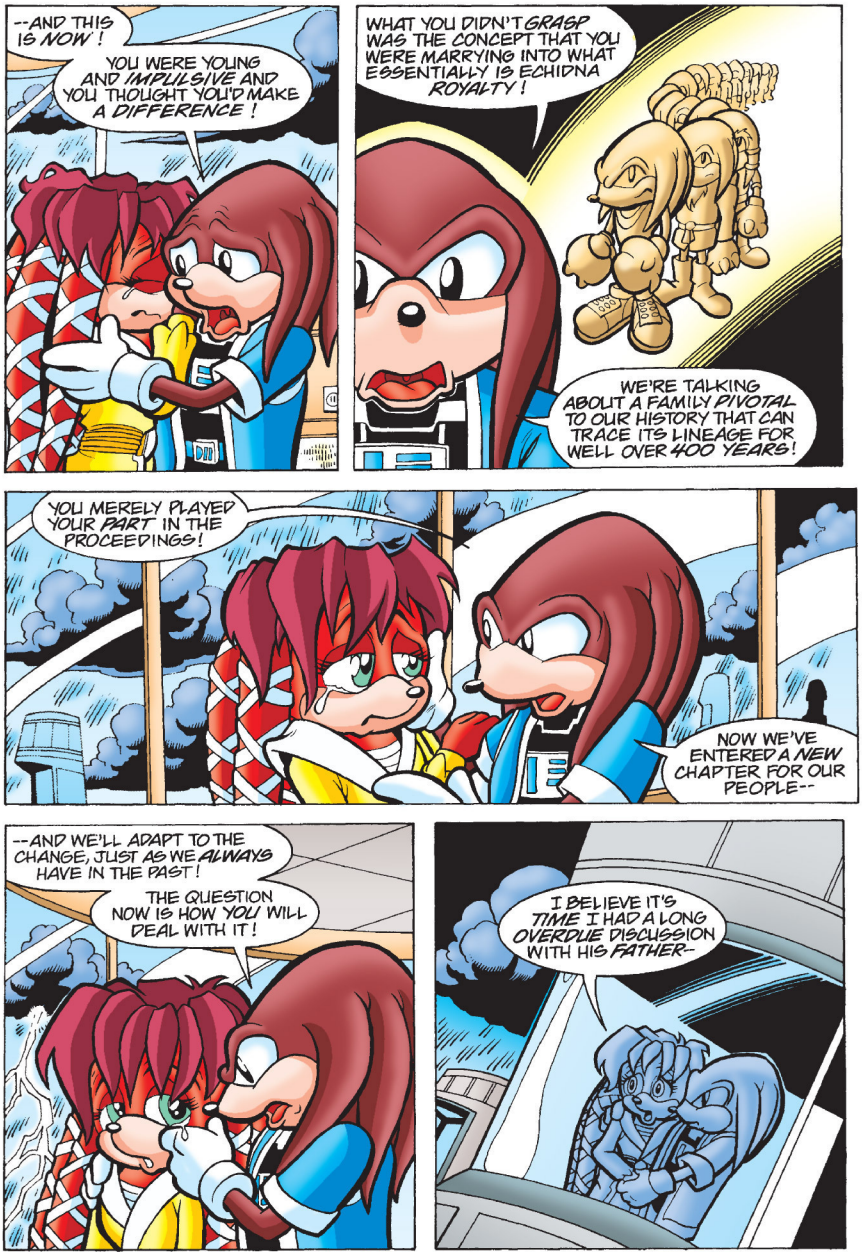
--AS I'VE SUSPENDED YOU IN MOTION BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN COMPLETE A THOUGHT!
YOU FIRE-ANTS HAVE BEEN NOTHING BUT A THORN IN MY SIDE EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER! THEREFORE--
--I THINK IT'S TIME I RETURN THE FAVOR!
AND THIS--
--THIS IS ONLY THE BEGINNING!
FA-VHRULUM!!
HAHAHAHAHA
"I HAVE COME BEFORE THIS ASSEMBLED BODY TO DISCUSS A MATTER OF MOST URGENT NEED FOR MY PEOPLE--
--REGARDING THE ISSUE OF HOUSING!
MY PEOPLE ARE TIRED OF LIVING IN TENTS!
I DEEPLY SYMPATHIZE WITH THEIR PLIGHT--

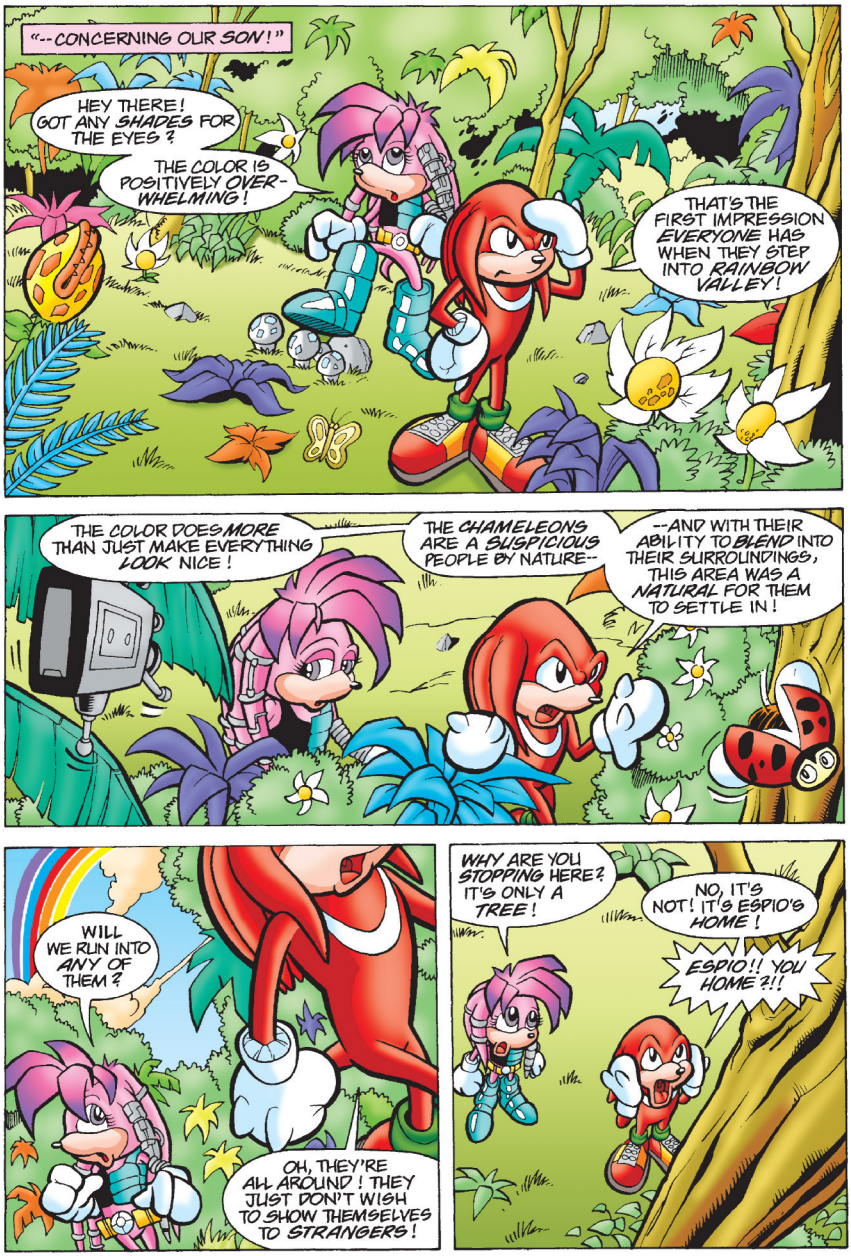

--BUT OUR CONSTRUCTION TEAM IS WORKING AS FAST AS IT CAN!
THAT'S SMALL CONCILIATION, COUNCILOR DARWIN!
SUPPOSE THE SHOE WERE ON THE OTHER FOOT--
--AND IT WAS OUR CITY THAT SURVIVED, WHILE YOUR KIND WERE LEFT HOMELESS!
I SINCERELY DOUBT YOU'D REACT ANY DIFFERENTLY THAN WE HAVE!
MISTER STRYKER, WHAT PROOF HAVE WE YOUR KIND CAN EVEN BE TRUSTED?
THE DINGOES HAVEN'T EXACTLY ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH PEACEFUL RELATIONS WITH THE ECHIDNAS IN THE PAST!
FIRST OF ALL, MADAM COUNCILOR, I'M A GENERAL, AND YOU WILL ADDRESS ME BY RANK!
SECOND, THE SITUATION HAS OBVIOUSLY CHANGED TO REFLECT MORE IN YOUR FAVOR!
WHAT CAN I DO THAT WILL FURTHER APPEASE YOU?
WELL, GENERAL STRYKER, I THINK I SPEAK FOR ALL WHEN I SAY THAT IF YOUR PEOPLE LAY DOWN THEIR ARMS, THAT WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARDS ESTABLISHING BETTER RELATIONS!
WHAT DO YOU SAY?
COUNCILOR DARWIN, AS LONG AS OUR HOUSING NEEDS ARE MET, THAT IS MORE THAN FAIR!
I GIVE YOU MY WORD OF HONOR--

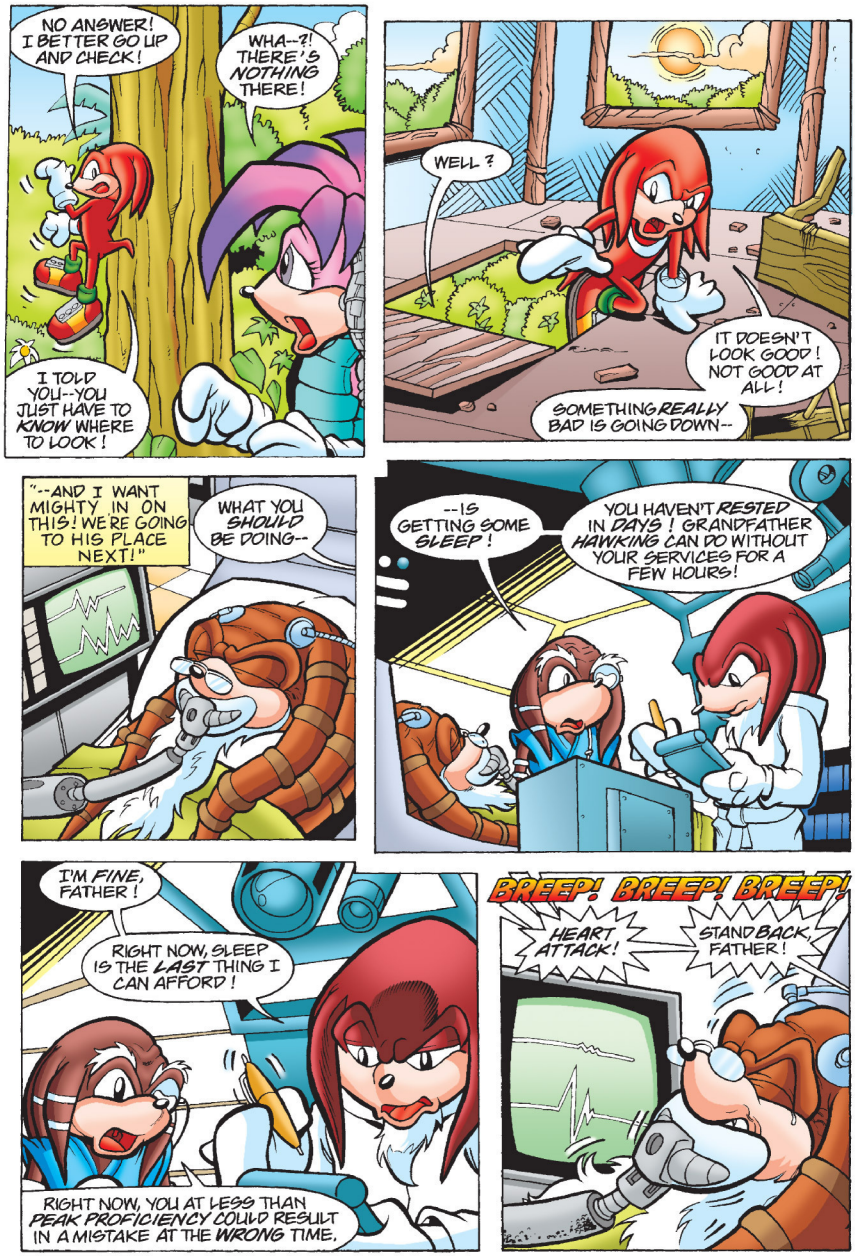

" --THAT MY PEOPLE WILL DO THEIR UTMOST TO COOPERATE WITH YOU ! "
WHERE ARE WE GOING?
THIS DOESN'T LOOK FAMILIAR TO ME AT ALL !
THIS PART OF THE LAVA-REEF ZONE RARELY GETS VISITORS --
--WHICH IS HOW THE NATIVES AROUND HERE PREFER IT !
NATIVES?
YEP, THE ONLY ONES WHO REALLY ENJOY THIS TYPE OF ENVIRONMENT !
OF COURSE, FINDING THEM IS THE REAL TRICK!
FIND WHAT? I DON'T SEE ANYTHING !
THAT'S 'CAUSE YOU'RE NOT LOOKING IN THE RIGHT SPOT !
KNUCKLES!
THIS IS A SURPRISE! WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
I'M LOOKING FOR ARCHIMEDES! ANY CLUE WHERE TO FIND HIM ?

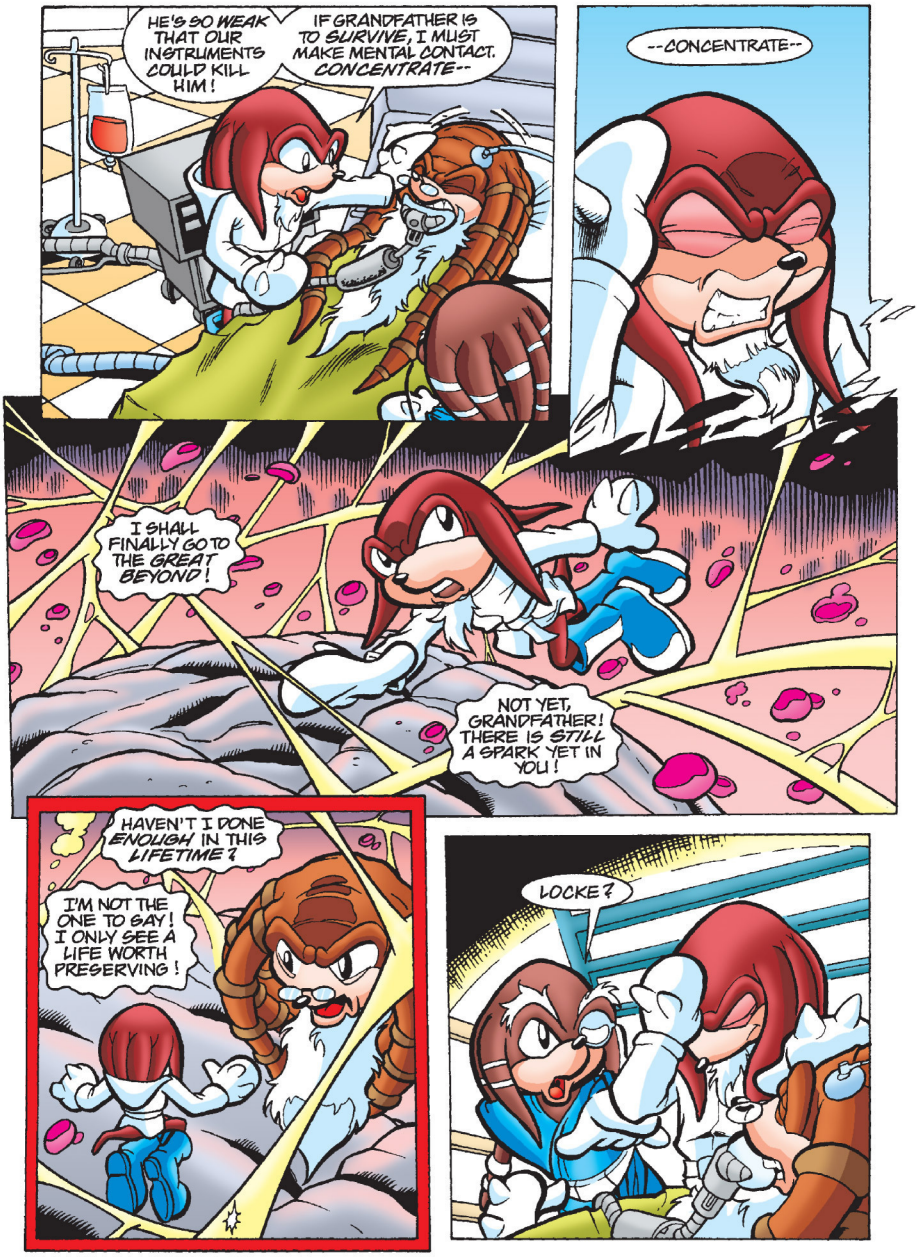

UNFORTUNATELY, NO!
IF ANYTHING, THE POWERS THAT BE ARE RATHER WORRIED THAT THEY HAVEN'T HEARD FROM EITHER HIM OR DEO VALENTE IN SOME TIME!
AS IN ZERO--ZIP--ZILCH--NADA?
YOU GOT IT!
THAT DOESN'T SOUND GOOD!
NO KIDDING! YOU'RE TALKING MAJOR UNDERSTATEMENT HERE!
IS IT THE DARK LEGION?
THE WAY EVERYONE IS ACTING, IT'S EVEN BIGGER THAN THAT!
BIGGER--?
THE ONLY ONES I CAN THINK OF MORE POWERFUL THAN THE LEGION ARE A LONG WAY FROM HERE!
WATCH YOUR BACK THEN, LAD!
THERE'S NOTHING MORE DANGEROUS THAN AN ENEMY WITH A SURPRISE ADVANTAGE!
I HEAR THAT!
AS FOR SURPRISES--

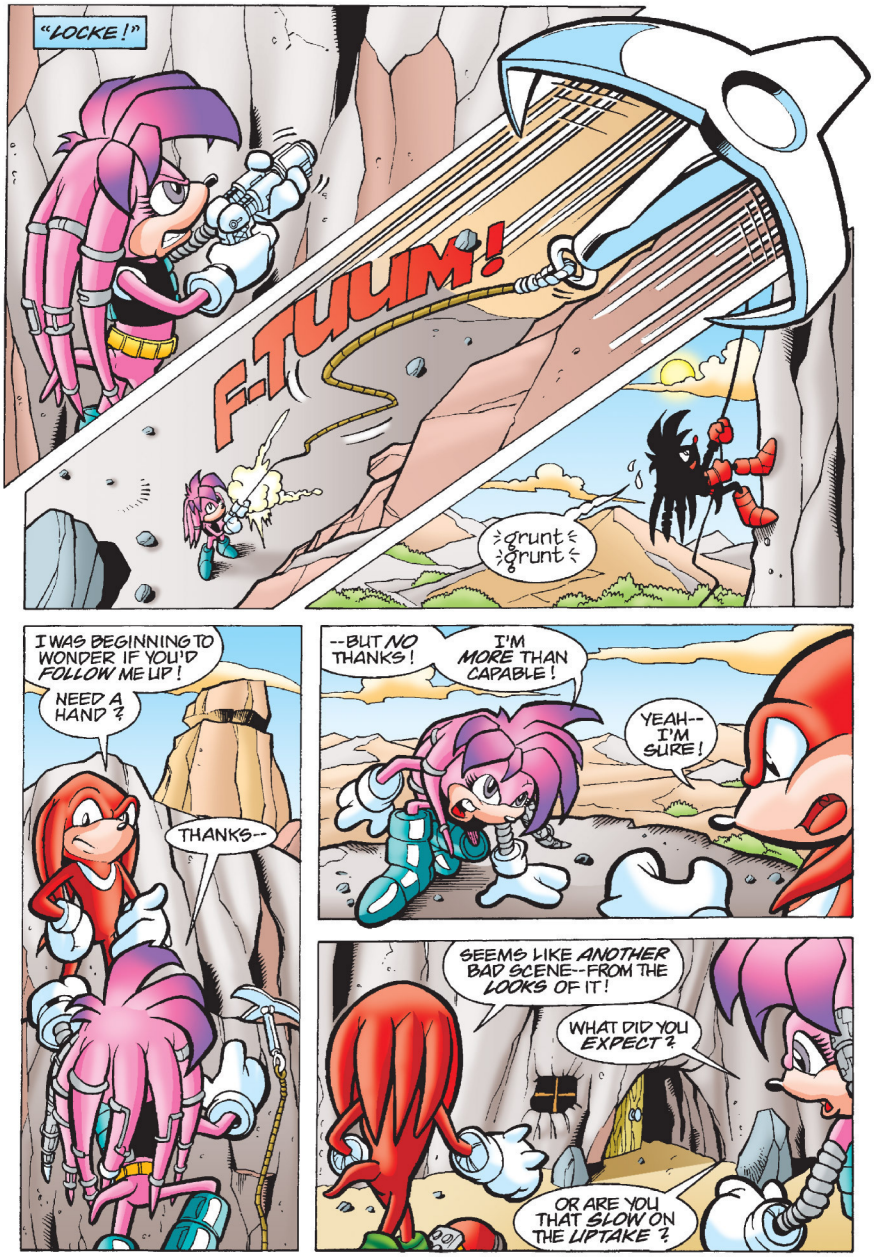

"--I'VE A TRICK OR TWO MYSELF!"
KRA-KHOOM!
I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS, WYN!
I CAN'T HAVE KNUCKLES THINKING HIS MOTHER DIDN'T WANT HIM!
YOU'RE NOT TO BLAME, MY DEAR!
YES, I AM!
BY AGREEING TO BE THE WIFE OF A GUARDIAN, I KNEW THE TERMS IN ACCEPTING!
I JUST DIDN'T KNOW I--
--I COULDN'T HANDLE--
OH, WYN--
THAT WAS THEN, DARLING--


--AND THIS IS NOW!
YOU WERE YOUNG AND IMPULSIVE AND YOU THOUGHT YOU'D MAKE A DIFFERENCE!
WHAT YOU DIDN'T GRASP WAS THE CONCEPT THAT YOU WERE MARRYING INTO WHAT ESSENTIALLY IS ECHIDNA ROYALTY!
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A FAMILY PIVOTAL TO OUR HISTORY THAT CAN TRACE ITS LINEAGE FOR WELL OVER 400 YEARS!
YOU MERELY PLAYED YOUR PART IN THE PROCEEDINGS!
NOW WE'VE ENTERED A NEW CHAPTER FOR OUR PEOPLE--
--AND WE'LL ADAPT TO THE CHANGE, JUST AS WE ALWAYS HAVE IN THE PAST!
THE QUESTION NOW IS HOW YOU WILL DEAL WITH IT!
I BELIEVE IT'S TIME I HAD A LONG OVERDUE DISCUSSION WITH HIS FATHER-

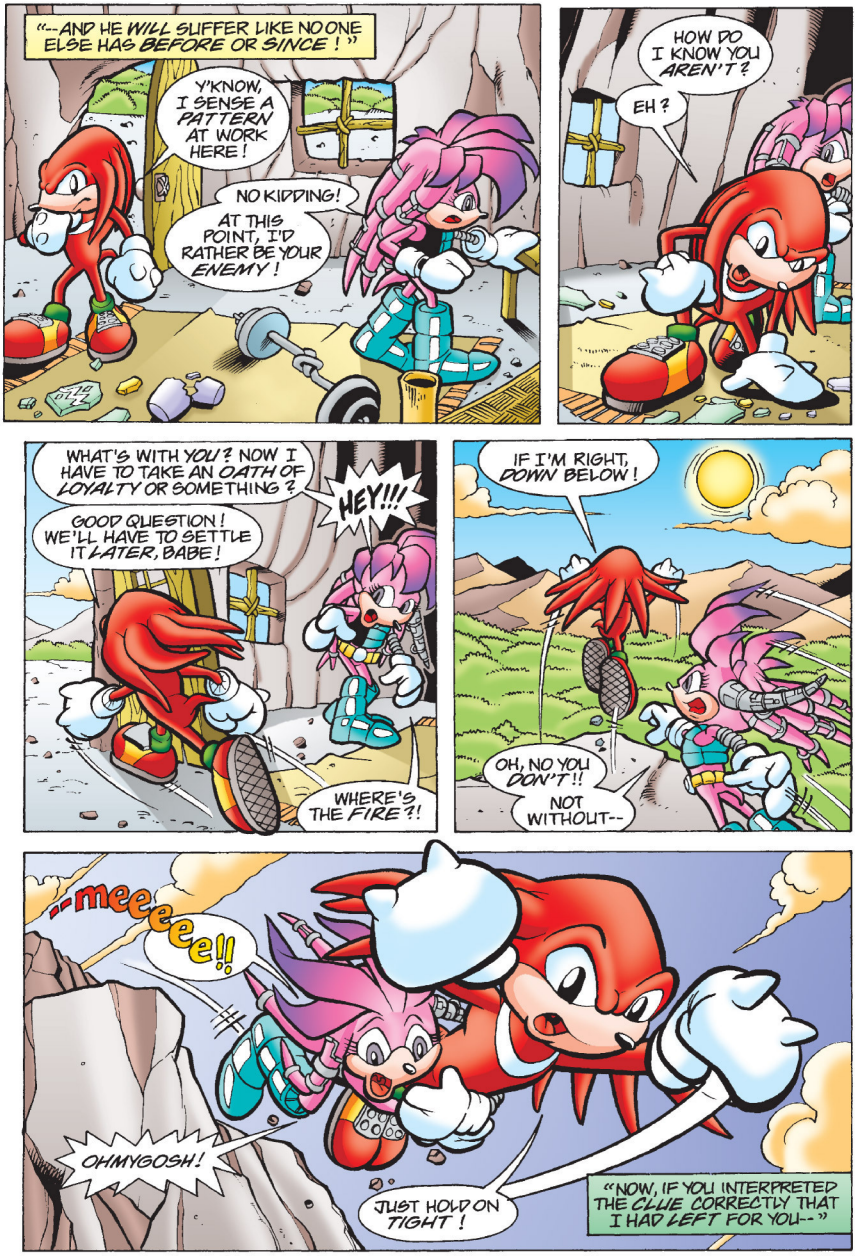

"--CONCERNING OUR SON!"
HEY THERE! GOT ANY SHADES FOR THE EYES?
THE COLOR IS POSITIVELY OVER-WHELMING!
THAT'S THE FIRST IMPRESSION EVERYONE HAS WHEN THEY STEP INTO RAINBOW VALLEY!
THE COLOR DOES MORE THAN JUST MAKE EVERYTHING LOOK NICE!
THE CHAMELEONS ARE A SUSPICIOUS PEOPLE BY NATURE--
--AND WITH THEIR ABILITY TO BLEND INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS, THIS AREA WAS A NATURAL FOR THEM TO SETTLE IN!
WILL WE RUN INTO ANY OF THEM?
OH, THEY'RE ALL AROUND! THEY JUST DON'T WISH TO SHOW THEMSELVES TO STRANGERS!
WHY ARE YOU STOPPING HERE? IT'S ONLY A TREE!
NO, IT'S NOT! IT'S ESPIO'S HOME!
ESPIO!! YOU HOME?!!

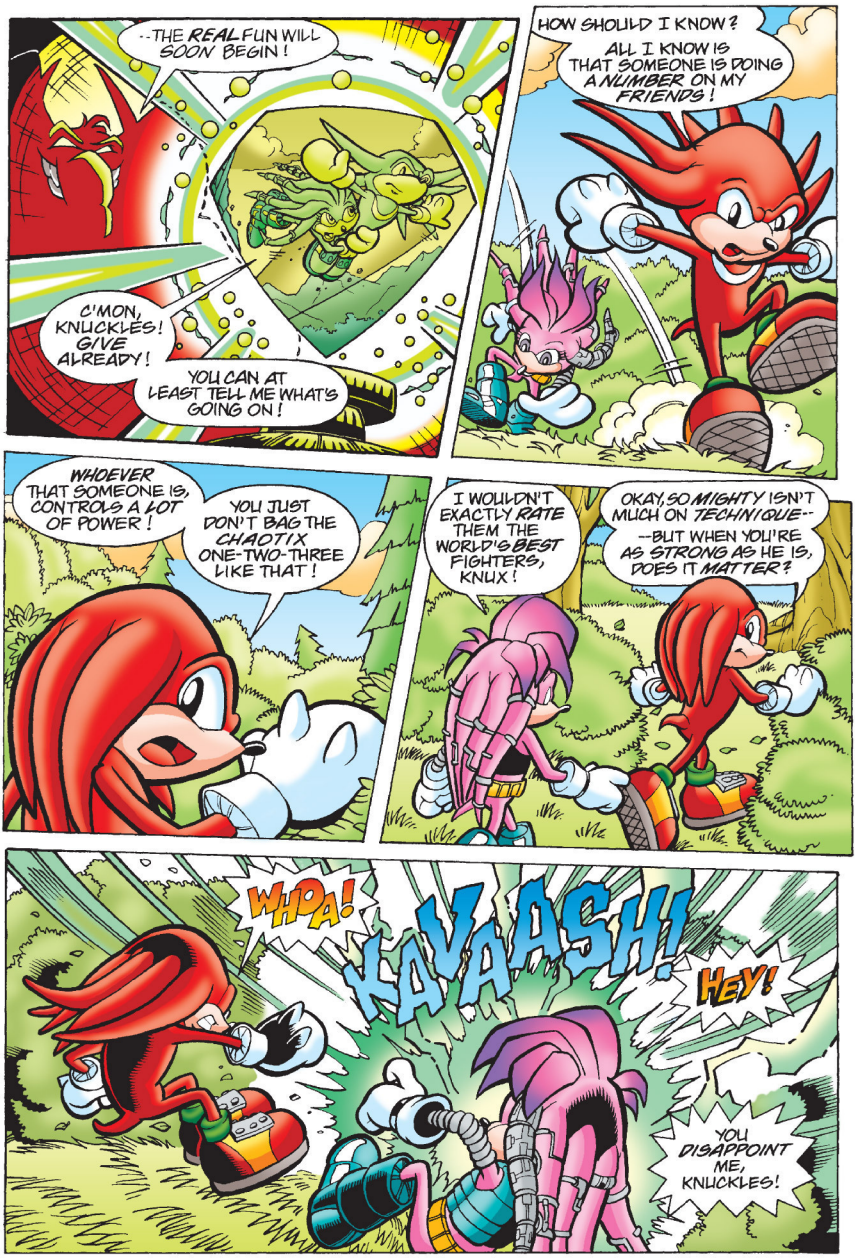

NO ANSWER! I BETTER GO UP AND CHECK!
WHA--?! THERE'S NOTHING THERE!
I TOLD YOU--YOU JUST HAVE TO KNOW WHERE TO LOOK!
WELL?
IT DOESN'T LOOK GOOD! NOT GOOD AT ALL!
SOMETHING REALLY BAD IS GOING DOWN--
"--AND I WANT MIGHTY IN ON THIS! WE'RE GOING TO HIS PLACE NEXT!"
WHAT YOU SHOULD BE DOING--
--IS GETTING SOME SLEEP!
YOU HAVEN'T RESTED IN DAYS! GRANDFATHER HAWKING CAN DO WITHOUT YOUR SERVICES FOR A FEW HOURS!
I'M FINE, FATHER!
RIGHT NOW, SLEEP IS THE LAST THING I CAN AFFORD!
RIGHT NOW, YOU AT LESS THAN PEAK PROFICIENCY COULD RESULT IN A MISTAKE AT THE WRONG TIME,
BREEP! BREEP! BREEP!
HEART ATTACK!
STAND BACK, FATHER!

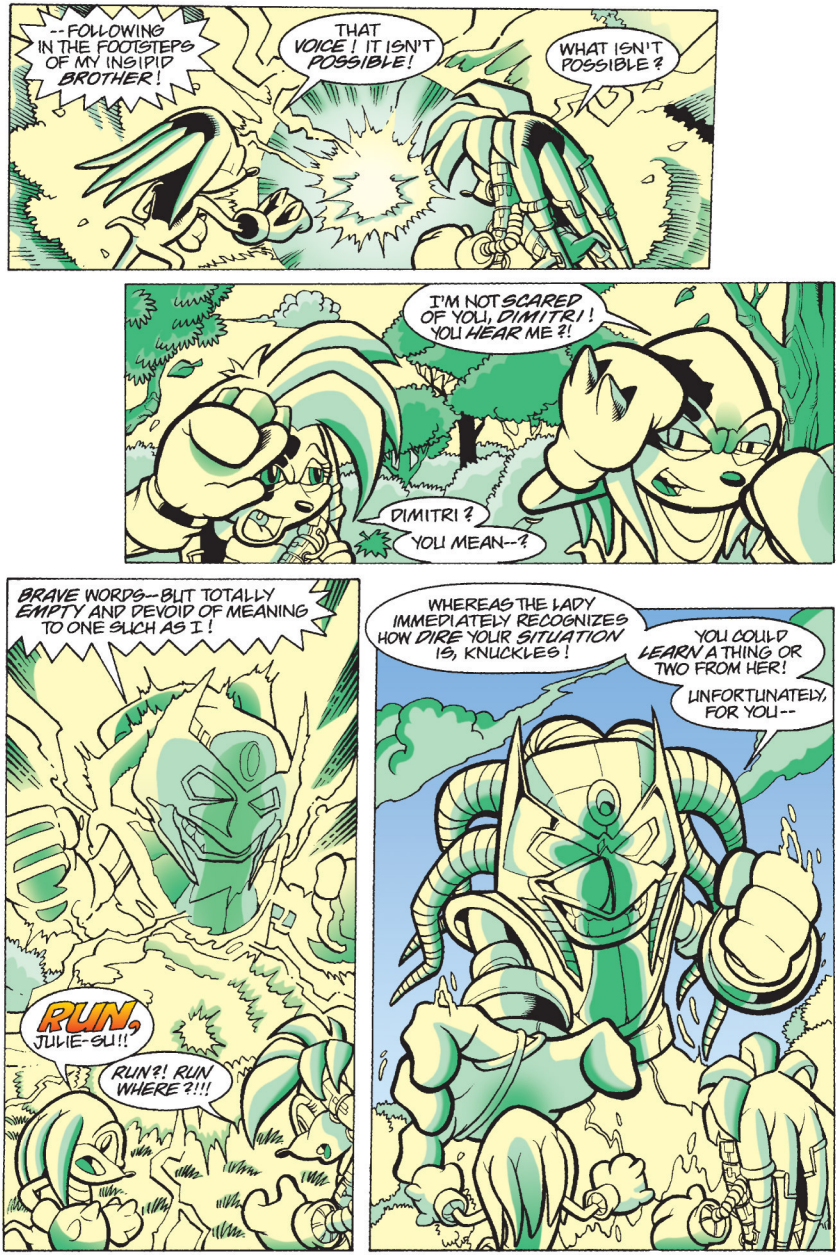

HE'S SO WEAK THAT OUR INSTRUMENTS COULD KILL HIM!
IF GRANDFATHER IS TO SURVIVE, I MUST MAKE MENTAL CONTACT. CONCENTRATE--
--CONCENTRATE--
I SHALL FINALLY GO TO THE GREAT BEYOND!
NOT YET, GRANDFATHER! THERE IS STILL A SPARK YET IN YOU!
HAVEN'T I DONE ENOUGH IN THIS LIFETIME?
I'M NOT THE ONE TO SAY! I ONLY SEE A LIFE WORTH PRESERVING!
LOCKE?

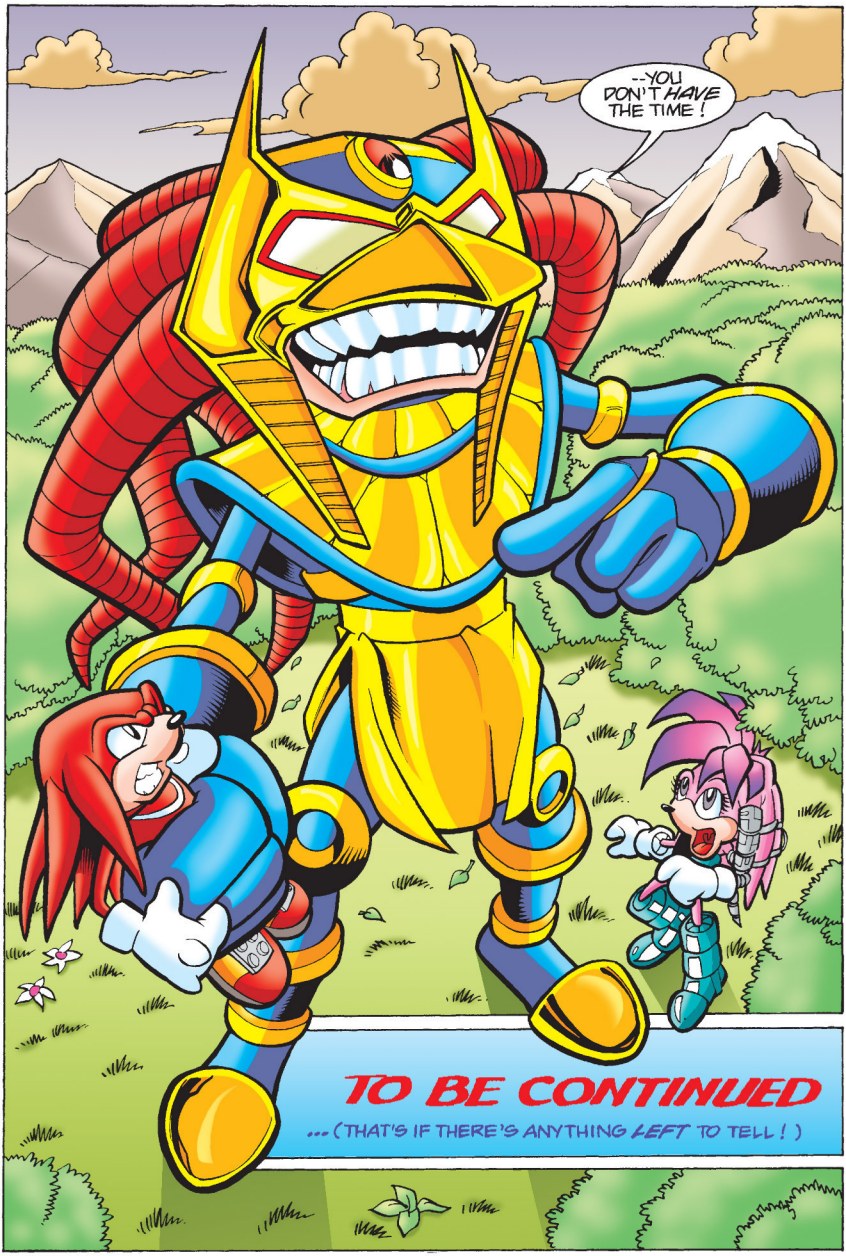

"LOCKE!"
F-TUUM!
grunt grunt
I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU'D FOLLOW ME UP!
NEED A HAND?
THANKS--
--BUT NO THANKS!
I'M MORE THAN CAPABLE!
YEAH-- I'M SURE!
SEEMS LIKE ANOTHER BAD SCENE--FROM THE LOOKS OF IT!
WHAT DID YOU EXPECT?
OR ARE YOU THAT SLOW ON THE UPTAKE?

"NO--JUST HOPEFUL!"
HEADS UP!
KRAGOK IS COMING THROUGH!
IT MUST BE IMPORTANT! HE'S BEEN WITH THE MASTER ALL DAY!
I'VE JUST INSPECTED THE TROOPS, MASTER, AND I--
WHAT DO YOU THINK IS GOING ON?
I COULDN'T EVEN SPECULATE!
JUST BE READY FOR ANYTHING!
YOU THINK YOU KNOW POWER, KRAGOK?
YOU CANNOT EVEN BEGIN TO FATHOM THE CONCEPT!
VERY SOON NOW, I WILL SPRING THE TRAP SHUT ON MY ACCURSED DESCENDANT--


"--AND HE WILL SUFFER LIKE NO ONE ELSE HAS BEFORE OR SINCE!"
Y'KNOW, I SENSE A PATTERN AT WORK HERE!
NO KIDDING! AT THIS POINT, I'D RATHER BE YOUR ENEMY!
HOW DO I KNOW YOU AREN'T?
EH?
WHAT'S WITH YOU? NOW I HAVE TO TAKE AN OATH OF LOYALTY OR SOMETHING?
HEY!!!
GOOD QUESTION! WE'LL HAVE TO SETTLE IT LATER, BABE!
WHERE'S THE FIRE?!
IF I'M RIGHT, DOWN BELOW!
OH, NO YOU DON'T!!
NOT WITHOUT--
--meeeeee!!
OHMYGOSH!
JUST HOLD ON TIGHT!
"NOW, IF YOU INTERPRETED THE CLUE CORRECTLY THAT I HAD LEFT FOR YOU--"


--THE REAL FUN WILL SOON BEGIN!
C'MON, KNUCKLES! GIVE ALREADY!
YOU CAN AT LEAST TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON!
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
ALL I KNOW IS THAT SOMEONE IS DOING A NUMBER ON MY FRIENDS!
WHOEVER THAT SOMEONE IS, CONTROLS A LOT OF POWER!
YOU JUST DON'T BAG THE CHAOTIX ONE-TWO-THREE LIKE THAT!
I WOULDN'T EXACTLY RATE THEM THE WORLD'S BEST FIGHTERS, KNUX!
OKAY, SO MIGHTY ISN'T MUCH ON TECHNIQUE--
--BUT WHEN YOU'RE AS STRONG AS HE IS, DOES IT MATTER?
WHOA!
KAVAASH!
HEY!
YOU DISAPPOINT ME, KNUCKLES!


--FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MY INSIPID BROTHER!
THAT VOICE! IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!
WHAT ISN'T POSSIBLE?
I'M NOT SCARED OF YOU, DIMITRI! YOU HEAR ME?!
DIMITRI?
YOU MEAN--?
BRAVE WORDS--BUT TOTALLY EMPTY AND DEVOID OF MEANING TO ONE SUCH AS I!
RUN, JULIE-SU!!!
RUN?! RUN WHERE?!!!
WHEREAS THE LADY IMMEDIATELY RECOGNIZES HOW DIRE YOUR SITUATION IS, KNUCKLES!
YOU COULD LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM HER!
UNFORTUNATELY, FOR YOU--


--YOU DON'T HAVE THE TIME!
TO BE CONTINUED
...(THAT'S IF THERE'S ANYTHING LEFT TO TELL!)